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ABSTRACT

Previous studies of professors of education have noted what activities comprised the work of being a professor, how professors allocated time to the various work tasks, how they would have preferred to allocate time, and insights they had about their work. In this study, parallel data were gathered on the broader education professoriate. Survey responses were received from 537 education professors representing 350 institutions of teacher education. Respondents were asked about professional background and experience, sex, institutional assignment, actual and preferred allocations of time to six work clusters, how they and their institution valued the work clusters, and insights about their institutions and their work as professors. An analysis is presented on professors' attitudes toward the work of teaching, using time, rewards and commitments, and collegial relationships. In a discussion on findings, the question is raised of whether universities are appropriate settings for teacher education, and the possible rewards for professors in periodically re-experiencing teaching in the field. (JD)

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Professors' Observations on Their Work

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Introduction

The reform of teacher education regularly has been tied to a reform of the education professoriate. Over 50 years ago, Flexner (1930) questioned whether the university was the proper setting for the conduct of teacher preparation. His concern, at least in part, was that the professor of education was too much the teacher and too little the scholar. Ironically, the common wisdom has come to be, "those who can't do, teach. And those who can't teach, teach teachers." This round condemnation of the whole enterprise sums up the attacks of current critics as well (Smith, 1980b; Joyce & Clift, 1984). On the one hand, education courses--and hence education professors--have been criticized as having little of substance to offer prospective teachers. What's worse, what they offer has been judged out of touch with the real world.

Substance and relevance have been elusive commodities. Perhaps they will become less so as the research base for teaching grows, and the incorporation of high quality field experience becomes common practice. B.O. Smith (1980a) has argued for both, in his call for the study of pedagogy and the inclusion of a clinical base. Identifying what is substantive and deciding what is relevant are the new charges to professors of education. Their capacity to carry out these charges may form the potential for the reform of teacher education.

Griffin (1984) believes that scholarship is important to the substance of comprehensive teacher education programs and has proposed five areas grounded in scholarship on which to build. But building research into teacher education programs is difficult for professors who must "sift through what is available to make content and process decisions." Griffin recognizes that this adds "yet another layer of professional activity to already complicated professional lives."

(p. 36)

For some teacher educators being a user of research is not enough: professors of education must be knowledge producers as well. Wisniewski represents this view:

Until schools of education apply scholarship in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of their programs, the gap between theory and practice will never be closed. It will never be addressed except at superficial levels....In order to become first-rate professional schools, scholarship must be the first order of business in all teacher preparation institutions. Teaching and professional service functions must be predicated on a constantly challenged knowledge base. All professors of education must contribute in appropriate ways to that base and to scholarly discourse. (Wisniewski, 1984, p. 7)

If all professors were involved as Wisniewski expects, their work would be yet more complicated.

The work of professors grows more complicated as they attempt to address the issue of relevance. Field experience--greater in quantity and better in quality--is the chief approach to assuring relevance in teacher education programs. Integrating field experience into traditional formats and campus courses is not without its difficulties. It requires professors to work in new ways with students, to honor experience as a form of knowledge, and to become knowledgeable themselves about what students encounter in field settings. The pursuit of relevance is taken a step further by those proposals, from legislators and practitioners, which would require professors periodically to re-experience the field.

Perhaps they would be more flexible in their thinking about what teacher education and teaching can be about...it does seem important that a large proportion of the faculty of a teacher education program have had current or recent experiences in teaching school age students. (Hall & Hord, 1984, p. 20)

Periodic re-acquaintance with the field may be essential to the work of professors as they decide what is relevant. But both using field experience and

engaging in self-renewal place demands on professors' work. Their work lives become more complicated.

Making teacher education more substantive and more relevant are only two aspects of reform. Both imply change in the work of being a professor great enough to be called reform. The reform of the professoriate may be the first step in the reform of teacher education.

The point of focusing on reform of teacher education at some length is to make obvious the increasing complexity of the work lives of education professors. Champion (1984) illustrated the matter as well:

...faculty members were expected to "wear several hats" simultaneously. They were nearly all involved in field supervision, administering programs, advising students, working on projects with school systems, participating actively in professional associations, teaching three to five courses, and serving on numerous campus committees. Research involvement and interaction were generally not a visible part of the culture. Those who managed research involvement did so "out-of-hide" and without guarantee of reward. (Champion, 1984, p. 12)

Knowing about the work lives of professors in education is an important concomitant of bringing about reform in teacher education.

The Work of Professors of Education

Studies of the work of college professors have been undertaken for years in an effort to understand issues such as productivity (Bean, 1982; Creswell, 1982), academic inbreeding (Wyer & Conrad, 1984; Eels & Cleveland, 1935a, 1935b; McGee, 1960), performance and satisfaction (Fink, 1982), stages of development (Baldwin, 1979; Van West, 1982; Braskamp, 1982; Baldwin & Blackburn, 1981), publishing and teaching effectiveness (Hicks, 1974). But there is reason to believe that work in a professional school is different from the basic disciplines. Professors of education may have appropriately different work lives.

Fewer studies have focused specifically on the work of professors of education. Durcharme & Agne (1982) surveyed education faculties in seven institutions and commented on three stereotypes of professors based on their data.

In 1979, we began a series of studies that focused specifically on the work of professors of education. The first studies followed a cadre of recent doctoral graduates in education who were presently at work in institutions of higher education. Those studies noted what activities comprised the work of being a professor, how the professors allocated time to the various work tasks, how they would have preferred to allocate time, and insights they had about their work. This series of studies was also able to point to changes in the work of being a professor over the early years, and before and after the critical points of tenure and promotion review. The results of this series of studies are reported in several sources, including "The Emerging Professoriate: A Study of How New Professors Spend Their Time," (Myers and Mager, 1981); "If First Impressions Count: New Professors' Insights and Problems," (Mager and Myers, 1982); Developing a Career in the Academy, (Mager and Myers, 1983); and "Choices in Academic Careers," (Myers and Mager, 1983); and "Blueprints for Academic Lives," (Mager and Myers, 1985).

At first as a backdrop to the studies of the new professors of education, but subsequently as a major undertaking in its own right, we set out to gather parallel data on the broader education professoriate. We wanted to develop a perspective on the work of being a professor in education as experienced by the range of faculty in the over 1200 colleges, schools and departments of education around the country.

Specifically, the questions which guided the study were:

How do professors of education spend time at work? How would they prefer to divide their time?

What insights or observations do they offer about their experience?

Do professors with different backgrounds or experiences differ in important ways?

Is there evidence of change in the work lives of the education professoriate?

Method

Sample and procedures. A sample of 661 colleges and universities having education programs was selected randomly from a list of all such institutions. This represents half the total number of colleges, schools, and departments of education in this country. A cover letter and two questionnaires were sent to the head of education in each of the selected institutions. The letter requested that one questionnaire be given to a less experienced faculty member in education and one to a more experienced faculty member. This strategy for obtaining the sample seemed more feasible than any other even though it is probable that a few of the questionnaires might never have reached potential respondents. Two addressed and postage-paid envelopes were included with the questionnaires so that respondents could return the questionnaires independently. Returned questionnaires were numbered as they were returned and most were returned within a month of mailing. A total of 1322 questionnaires were distributed. Usable responses numbered 537, or 41 percent. The returned questionnaires represented 350 institutions; 177 institutions returned two questionnaires while 173 returned only one. Eight respondents did not identify their institutions.

In the responses are represented approximately one quarter of the teacher education institutions in the country. No study known to us has garnered the responses of such a diverse group of education professors, except that in a Ford Foundation report (1982) and its focus was more on the profession than the professoriate. But since only two responses were sought from each institution,

the respondents do not proportionally represent the education professoriate. Some institutions have only a few faculty members while other institutions count their faculties in the hundreds; professors at smaller institutions are equally represented in number with professors at larger institutions. It is important to understand that the sample and procedures were designed to obtain candid responses from the full range of professors of education. The number and diversity of the responses suggest the study succeeded in doing so.

Instrumentation. The questionnaire was developed inductively from the earlier studies of new professors. Each questionnaire contained a brief explanation of the purpose of the study and the directions for responding. On one page 11 questions were asked about professional background and experience, sex, and institutional assignment. On the second page professors were asked to describe their actual and preferred allocations of time to six work clusters. Next, respondents were asked to report how they and their institutions valued the work clusters. At the end of the page they were asked to write an observation or insight about their institutions and their work as professors.

Analysis

A coding system was developed so that the data regarding professional background and experience, sex, institutional assignment, allocations of time, and valued work could be entered into a computer for summary and analysis. Frequencies and means were calculated for variables that were continuous; simple frequencies were calculated for categorical data.

Reports of the insights and observations were typed on 3 x 5 cards, maintaining the individual respondents' code numbers. The cards were read and cards offering similar observations were grouped. The intention of this procedure was to retain a full range of the reports and illustrate the topics with particularly clear examples. What was hoped for from this analysis was a map of

the interests of contemporary professors. A similar analytical approach was used successfully in an earlier study (Mager & Myers, 1982).

Professors' Observations of Their Work

The observations offered by the professors covered a wide range of topics as was expected and professors expressed their thoughts sometimes in short phrases and sometimes in extended paragraphs. Most of them were a sentence or two in length. Though these professors represented approximately 350 institutions, there were considerable overlays in their observations. Since only one observation per response form was requested the data cannot show which sentiments are most commonly felt. The following display intends to simply reflect the nature and breadth of their comments.

The Work of Teaching

There is a strong commitment among professors of education to teaching. This strength is evidenced not only in the numbers of people who commented about teaching as an important part of their work but also in the power of their language. This commitment is one which perhaps is taken for granted in the business of education but it is doubtful that professors across the institution would display as strong a commitment. One might reasonably argue that professors of education should be strongly committed to excellence in teaching and they report they are. While researchers into the work of higher education professors are wont to compare professorial productivity in terms of publications, grants, and presentations, the work of teaching is taken for granted. Professors of education have, at times, been judged less productive on such measures (though more recently even these judgments have been found suspect). Productivity through teaching, far beyond the surface measures of

FTE's and course loads, seems to be on the minds of the education professors. If any part of the institution should uphold the standard of excellent teaching as a mark of productivity perhaps it should be teachers of teachers.

Teaching is an all-encompassing life activity. It is not an eight-hour job. No matter how long one teaches, continued study through research, with colleagues and students is necessary for growth and development. (Questionnaire 452)

Using Time

Good teaching takes time and concern about time is the most pervasive concern among these professors. Time is a kind of commodity by which professors measure their ability to attend to teaching, administering programs, committee work, work with students individually, research, and personal development. By far, they do not have enough time to do it all.

I'm struck by how much time can "disappear" coping with mail which comes across my desk and how much more is involved in the role of professor than teaching and research. I am pleased, however, to be at an institution which stresses teaching. (Questionnaire 40)

My time is my most valuable possession and I must value carefully how it is spent. Some of my contribution to this college is never recognized. (Questionnaire 80)

Gaining control of time, perhaps a challenge in all professional life styles, may be more so when the nature of the work presents fewer structures by which to regulate time's use. Professors who teach 15 or more hours per week are clearly pressed for time but professors who report teaching far less also seem to have difficulty controlling time. Not having enough time and not being able to control the time that is available leads to conflicts and compromises. Frequent conflict is evident between the many administrative tasks the professors apparently must accomplish and other work. The professors reported such conflicts with teaching, research, and personal development.

I enjoy teaching - I'm a good teacher. But, I'm supposed to be doing research and it is tough to find time for this during the academic year. My teaching load doesn't really allow time for research. Nevertheless, research will be a major part of a tenure decision. (Questionnaire 405)

Confronted with the many demands on their time and the conflicting expectations their institutions hold for them and they hold for themselves, professors compromise their work. Not always do they feel good about these compromises.

There are not enough hours in the day to be the best scholar, the best teacher, and the best colleague that one is capable of being. One has to compromise and make trade-offs in what one chooses to prioritize. (Questionnaire 313)

Time, more than any other factor, limits the areas in which one may work. One of the more difficult tasks is to allocate time to the many areas in which one is assigned and areas one wishes to pursue. (Questionnaire 141)

Rewards and Commitments

Knowing how to spend the time available, suggests clear understanding of one's personal goals and institutional priorities. The overt mark of institutional priorities is the promotion and tenure system for new professors and the subtle set of rewards for established professors including salary, moral support, and status. The comments of the professors lead one to worry about the efficacy of the reward structure.

Balance is important if one is to be an effective college professor. However, time is limited and faculty must prioritize this input on the basis of institution expected output. One usually compromises between what they deem most important professionally and what the institution will reward. (Questionnaire 103)

These professors frequently wrote about mismatches between achievement and the rewards tendered. No single comment praised the equity of the system. Sometimes professors even wrote of disincentives.

I am increasingly disillusioned by the failure of the "senior" faculty and administrative staff to produce--good scholarship, good decisions, good leadership, and so on. I am trying to understand disincentives for productivity in academic life, and to keep from being influenced. (Questionnaire 532)

Being a good professor requires a level of personal commitment given that the work is not contained in the typical 40-hour week and given that much of the work of professors can be carried home; the work is more a life style than a job.

To teach in a manner most beneficial to students requires that a professor be a scholar and researcher as well as an instructor and requires huge amounts of time. (Questionnaire 391)

Some of the professors reported strong personal commitments to their work but some of them reported that their commitments were wavering. With the goal of excellence in teaching, with the demands of other institutional tasks, with the limited time and a reward structure that is perceived as not clearly supportive, professors might well keep the briefcase closed at home.

For many, professional life is as demanding or undemanding as you care to make it. Some professors teach their classes and disappear. I'd guess that about the same half of the professors here serve on the various committees, projects, etc. while about one half teach, meet office hours and pretty much stay out of other campus duties - other than those they cannot avoid. In a sense, it is a bit like being in a business where you set your own pace and objectives. If one gets involved with the campus politics of Faculty Senate or union, or various other activities, one can be swamped with work. (Questionnaire 261)

Colleagues and Curmudgeons

One source of sustenance in dealing with the pressures of time and limited resources could well be the support of colleagues. Undoubtedly among education professors this is the case.

I am finally in an institution that actually has a supportive organizational climate (and I've been at lots that don't). I've done more, because of this climate - and central administration is KEY - in 2+ years than in 8 previous years. You can't believe the difference it makes in one's perception of self, as person and as professional. (Questionnaire 309)

But often these professors reported that their colleagues were not supportive; they might more readily be characterized as curmudgeons. It must really be worrisome when people who must work together in program reformation and leadership are not seen as worthy, trusting, or welcomed colleagues.

There is far too much infighting between departments or colleges of the university. People do not stick together for a common cause. The economy has caused a greater sense of insecurity. Communication problems abound in all areas of life!! (Questionnaire 115)

The Perspective of Time

Perhaps because of the nature of the questionnaire some professors chose to offer comments based on their newness or seniority in the work of being professors. For others this type of comment may simply have been an accident. In either case their comments begin to suggest that the perspectives on being a professor are tied to length of service. And while these perspectives don't "balance" each other they do suggest that there may be something important to an institution about having people with each.

New professors--that is less experienced--commented about needing/working to find a place in the institution.

As a new professor it is very easy to be shaken by the insecurity of a college position and the somewhat ill-defined methods for achieving that security. It is a must to define your own priorities and to function as your own person. (Questionnaire 331)

Newer professors also reported excitement about being involved in programs, or institutions or projects that were clearly growing or developing, perhaps simultaneously with their early careers.

As a new professor I am fortunate to be in a department which is in the process of a major program revision. However, I must increase my scholarly production, both for personal satisfaction and institutional requirements. (Questionnaire 220)

More senior professors were able to bring a sense of history to their current experience and to the institution's current activity. They talked about how they had changed over the years; many had gained greater control over their work and had a sense of setting their own direction as professors. Reflecting back on their careers, they could speak with satisfaction and pleasure about the work they had given their lives to. Some senior professors thoughtfully expressed concern about the directions in which they saw their institutions or academia were generally moving. These professors were able to raise serious questions about institutional priorities or the work of higher education.

Too much insistence of, and rewards for, research frequently detract seriously from attention given to teaching and thus can interfere with the first purpose of the university. The university prides itself on the quality of teaching, and rightly so, but in the past several years a number of our faculty have devoted enough time to research to detract from teaching. (Questionnaire 535)

Whether an institution needs both newer and more senior faculty is a difficult question. But given the current developments facing faculties of education, it would seem to be a clear advantage to a college, school or department of education to have both the enthusiasm of new faculty and the sense of history of their more senior counterparts.

Other Comments

There were among the reported comments several which represented limited perspectives but which seem as well important to include here.

Small colleges. Several representatives of small colleges to which the questionnaire had been sent focused their comments on their work particularly in that context. They spoke about the particular difficulties of operating full programs and working as a department in the institution when sharing the work among only a few colleagues.

Time is very difficult to acquire in a small college situation. There is certainly a need to have some method built into the day in which time for study, research and professional growth can be always allocated.
(Questionnaire 533)

While their work might be comparable to professors' in larger institutions in many dimensions, professors of education in small institutions clearly must deal with some unique demands.

Moving up to higher education. There were but a few comments where professors wanted to make clear that they had moved from public school positions/careers to faculty status in higher education. Their comments were disconcerting because they suggested that their entry into higher education was seen as a form of retirement.

I am given great freedom, great support, and suitable (low-key) recognition. This is a post-retirement job for me, as I took optional early retirement from an elementary classroom because of a mild hearing loss.
(Questionnaire 299)

While one professor spoke with surprise about how hard the work of being a professor is, another was far less energized. While seeking bridges between higher education and elementary and secondary schools, and while looking for ways to incorporate the knowledge that comes with experience into the studies of new teachers, one would have to question whether doing so through such tired professors is the route to go.

After having taught elementary school for many years before moving to the college level, I can only say that no matter how hard I work, it is an easy job compared to teaching younger students. (Questionnaire 159)

Hard times. Several of the comments evidenced sensitivity that professors of education have about the difficult financial circumstances their institutions are experiencing. These professors are clearly aware that their institutions are struggling with the acquisition and allocation of resources. (Some of these professors spoke of the limited resources available for their own departments compared to other departments in the institution!)

We are coming closer to a siege mentality because of predicted decline in enrollments. Nevertheless, we are working hard to improve quality of instruction.
(Questionnaire 291)

Discussion

The professors participating in this study provided ample testimony about the complexity of their work lives resulting from multiple and sometimes conflicting demands. Sometimes these demands arose out of individuals' own strong commitments such as the commitment to teaching; education professors may hold this commitment especially strongly. Other times these demands arose out of institutional expectations or conditions and required setting priorities among equally worthy choices. The resulting compromises were sometimes unsatisfactory but sometimes they brought balance to professors' work lives. The more experienced professors' longer perspectives on their work showed they remained mindful of the conflicts and their sources but they had found their work worthwhile generally. It's a great life if you can survive it.

Questioning whether universities are appropriate settings for teacher education is rarely heard today. It is more common to question whether any settings other than universities are appropriate. A university setting is prerequisite for the recommendation that those who teach teachers should also be involved in generating knowledge about teaching. This recommendation possesses face validity at least and it also formalizes the demand that expectations for professors of education must encompass those of other

university professors regardless of special expectations. As in other professions, students in teacher education must be able to "do" what they learn from their professors. In contrast, teaching students to "know" is the role of arts and sciences faculty. The faculty requirements are qualitatively different for these two purposes. If the professor presents knowledge in a fairly organized manner, then most college students can assume the burden of learning it. Of course, if professors do other things to facilitate learning the task may be eased but learning depends largely on the student's ability, experience and effort. When knowing is expected to be followed by doing, then the professor's teaching role expands. Knowledge is still the beginning but professors of education must demonstrate how to use the knowledge students learn. Students then need to practice what they learn and receive feedback about the adequacy of their practice. Professors of education try to provide for at least some laboratory practice so they can give feedback although most practice is actually in schools where feedback may be somewhat haphazard. This extended teaching is characteristic of professional education and creates special expectations for the education professoriate in the university. If professors' work lives are central to the reform of teacher education perhaps questions of the appropriateness of the university setting need to be re-opened.

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